THE HAPPIEST CHRISTMAS.

They Can Each Remember It, and How They Spent the Day.

A BIG SYMPOSIUM OF EXPERIENCES.

Some Go Back to Their Childhood, Others Recall Their Honeymoon, But All Agree That it is a Jolly Season.

SEVERAL days ago The Times addressed letters to some of its friends, asking them to reply to the questions: "Which was the happiest Christmas you ever spent, and how did you spend it?" Some of the replies received will be found below. They are all written by men well-known in Richmond and will doubtless prove an interesting feature to the Christmas edition of The Times:

COLON L. JOHN BELL BOGGER.

There are probably many who, if asked these questions, would refer back to their childhood days, when they enjoyed the animating belief that Santa Claus was a thing of reality, and stocking-hanging-up was a thing of joy. But so far back at those days in my case that memory is clouded by the years which have since sped swiftly by, and I cannot now recall any particular Christmas in these days on which I was happier than on any other. Memory does recall one Christmas when, in the days of early manhood there sat by my side one of the fair sex who, in her confiding nature, had placed her hand in mine some short while before, and who was on that Christmas-Day the sunbeam which brightened every movement of life's changing scenes and on a Christmas-Day in years later, when we were blessed with children, I watched the sparkling eyes of their mamma as these young Americans gleefully romped amid the trinkets which had been plucked from the Christmas-tree. But no little ones are at home now to pull tin wagons or play with dolls. Two have passed away and the other ten are all grown up and overtaken by such cares as come along in life, and gray-haired papa and mamma are saddened by the thought of soon going from them forever. There is no such favored spot on earth as a home which changeth not.

REV. DR. J. J. LAFFERTY.

My happiest Christmas was spent forty odd years ago among the young slaves of a plantation nearby the lower Roanoke, hunting hares and "busting" pop-crackers, and firing a toy cannon. I owned a small bird gun, a new knife and a rubber ball—things seldom seen in that interior section. A country lad couldn't hold any more happiness. The pressure was a thousand pounds to the square inch. The white boy "place freedom" is a sorry sight on Christmas.

MR. JOHN S. HARWOOD.

Christmas morning was a source o great pleasure to me, as I watched my little four-year-old boy approach his Christmas-tree. Such delight and joy I never witnessed before. He was soon joined by his little companion, and as I looked upon the picture of true happiness I could but exclaim:

"Oh, time of peace and joy!
Only to be once more a wakeful, watchful boy!
With the stocking in the corner for old Santa Claus to fill,
I shall ever thank God for Christmas.
I'm a boy in memory still."

Later in the day several friends called on me, among them many of my old school chums from a distance. As incident after incident of former days was recited, there came up to me pleasant and happy recollections. It was a source of great happiness to introduce to them my good wife and baby boy. In the afternoon I contributed to the wants of some poor families, and the pleasure in witnessing the joy expressed by the recipients afforded me much happiness. As my wife and self sat by our fireside at night, I felt that we should be truly thankful for the blessings God had bestowed during the year, and both agreed that Christmas, 1890, was the haplest of our lives.

REV. JOHN JASPER.

The happiest Christmas I ever spent was December 25, 1884, the day of My Lord's Birth, and to think that I could join with His people to worship Him was the way I spent that Christmas.

MR. J. E. JACKSON.

"Which was the happiest Christmas you ever spent, and how did you spend it?"

Probably the happiest Christmases which any of us ever spent were those of our childhood. Looking back at them now, they seem to have been seasons of unalloyed pleasure, and doubtless they were, as we then had no cares and not only did we enjoy ourselves, but the efforts of all those nearest and dearest to us were devoted to making pleasure and happiness for us. Doubtless much of this pleasure seems more intense to us even now than it did then. It is surrounded bky a glamour which passing years serve only to intensify rather than diminish. I take it, however, that you desire rather that I should tell you of the happiest Christmas which I have spent since the passing away of the days of my childhood. Probably this might be fixed at a period of twenty years ago, when, although no longer a boy, I was yet in the heyday of young manhood, with a wife and dear children around me in my own dear native land amongst the western hills of my native county, where still lingers much of the old-time hospitality and quaint customs of the "merrie England" of the past, and where music is the passion of nearly every native.

At that time the keeping of Christmas was religiously observed. No work was done from the day before Christmas-Day until at least the day but one following it. The cellars and pantries were filled to repletion with all the good things of life, and every preparation made to enjoy them. The houses were decorated with evergreens and mistletoe, and all the churches made beautiful by loving hands with texts and decorations. Christmas Eve marked the commencement—and the placing of the Yule log on the fire was the first indication, of the joyful season. On that night would be given a performance of Handel's great masterpiece, "The Messiah," in the town hall of our nearest town, when the place would be packed with an audience of from 2,000 to 3,000 people and the work would be rendered by principals and chorus of five hundred performers, supported by a band of a hundred executants and the grand festival organ. From the opening strains of "Comfort ye my people" on through the pastoral story of Christ's birth and the ultimate triumph of His cause, as [illegible] this great work and wedded to music nearer, in my opinion, to that of the angels than was ever realized by any [illegible] composer, the whole of the vast crowd would listen with rapt and silent [illegible] only by the involuntary rising and standing of the whole audience in mute reverence, during the singing of [illegible] Hallelujah chorus." These performances of this grand work were not merely incident to the large towns and cities, but took place in almost every small village, each of which had its own choral society and band, probably of one or two hundred performers. Such a celebration most appropriately marks the season of the coming of the Saviour. At midnight on Christmas Eve the bells in the village churches (most churches there have peals of six or eight bells) would ring out a merry peal for half an hour, resounding over hill and dale, and the city churches, having chimes, would chime out the Christmas hymn, "Christians, awake, salute the happy morn." Long before daylight broke on Christmas-Day bands of singers, with the accompaniment of violins and basses, would perambulate the villages and all the countryside, waking up the sleepers with the Christmas hymn and other sacred music. These singers it was our custom to welcome to our houses and regale with Christmas cake and coffee or good, home-brewed beer, as they preferred, and often have I got up at 4 o'clock in the morning to admit them to my house and listen to their sweet performances for an hour or more. All through the day different bands of these carol singers would call at our houses and give their performances, being satisfied to receive a small gratuity, which was usually applied to some benevolent purpose, or for the purchase of musical instruments or music. At 10 o'clock in the morning of Christmas Day service would be held in the church, opened by the Christmas hymn, "Christians, Awake," and followed by an anthem from the Messiah, and after that the rest of the day would be given over to family gatherings around the well-filled board, and to quiet social enjoyment and the amusement of the little ones with Christmas trees, and games. In the evening the Morris dancers and murmurers would come to our houses, dressed in fantastic costumes, and perform their plays and sing. The sounds of tin horns and firecrackers were never heard. How it ever became possible to celebrate the birth of the "Prince of Peace" with such horrible peace-destroying and dangerous features passes my comprehension. Throughout England the whole Christmas season is marked by family gatherings and a quiet enjoyment of the pleasures of open-hearted hospitality to all. Those dependent upon you make it part of their duty to call upon you and wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year, and to eat and drink at your table and to receive "Christmas boxes" (small gifts of money). All through the day our doors were seldom long closed against such visitors, and by night fall greathavoc had been made with the Christmas cake, cheese and homebrewed beer. In this way kindly feelings were continued and friendships cemented, and we were all made to feel that we were one common family, celebrating the birth of our common Saviour and rejoicing together over that happy event.

"Times like these, in quick succession,
Taught e'en toil to please."

REV. DR. JAMES Y. FAIR.

In my experience no Christmas stands out prominently as the happiest. They all tower up equally, like the peaks of a great mountain chain, bathed in the golden tints of memory's magic haze, and ranging back 'til the consecutive links dissolve into the beauty of life's roseate dawn.

My childhood was almost completely isolated in the life of my South Carolina home, and its brightness was obscured by the gathering clouds of war; but I presume the recurrence of the great Christian festival scarcely ever brought greater joy to any child. How brightly it dawned out of the soft Southern skies! It wove its romance around the river and the hills; its glad spirit seemed to touch even the gloomy old cypress trees, and to whisper a sweeter note into the plaintive roaring of the pines; but of the fairy-land of those far off days, its memory lingers with me yet, fragrant as the magnolia and evergreen as the holly.

I usually spend the week in the quiet enjoyments of home. One of its most pleasant occupations is the annual round of Christmas literature I invariably read, not the least loved of which is Washington Irving's description of his Christmas observance in England, and Tennyson's "Morte D'Arthur."

I wish The Times and each of its numerous readers a merry Christmas and a happy New-Year.

MR. HENRY T. MELONEY.

I do not remember any particular Christmas which was spent with such special incidents as to make it conspicuously happy above all others. But my experience is that when I have done most to make others happy it made the happiest Christmas for me. There are few men, perhaps, who have arrived at the meridian of life who, if asked which was the happiest Christmas they ever spent, and how they spent it, whose memory would not instantly revert to childhood's days. My memory vividly reproduces the happy scenes and incidents at the old country home, with the big, dome-shaped wood pile looming up in the wood-yard; the smoke-house fairly groaning under its winter stores, the garret laden with fruits and nuts, and Christmas Eve at hand. Stockings were hung near the chimney fire-places, and the children retired early. Rising at 5 in the morning, before the huge, blazing log fires we gathered, with father and mother, and with happy hearts we confidently peered into the heavy-laden stockings to find good old Santa Claus' never-failing remembrances. Then, with peals of delight, as the day dawned, we gave full vent to our exuberance of joy in a rollicking play in the lawn, and with cheer after cheer for the glorious day-burst of another Christmas, fire off and explode every conceivable thing that would make a noise.

The happy experiences of childhood always remain fresh upon the memory. Perhaps they are immortal. If so, it but emphasizes the importance of striving to make childhood days bright and happy at all times, and especially so at the ever youthful Christmas tide.

REV. DR. W. J. YOUNG.

It would be difficult for me to say just which one of all my Christmasses has been the happiest. All of them have been happy, very happy; indeed, of late all days are happy—the privilege of the Christian, whose Bible commands him to rejoice in the Lord always. But of all my happy Christmasses, those have been the happiest that have been spent in the way most nearly in harmony with the lessons of the manager and the cross-carrying all, not sending it, to the poor of the parish, taking not only what we call the necessities, but some of the sweeter things of life—a little of the outside Christmas cheer; visiting the sick, and trying to take along with me a snatch of the angel song; going to the prison house to tell those in bondage the story of the Saviour's love. Yes, those days are ever the brightest to God's children, be they Christmasses or not, that are spent most nearly like His days, who went about doing good.

EDWARD S. ROSE.

There is nothing half so sweet in life as the recollections of our childhood, not excepting love's young dream, therefore, your question carries me back to the halcyon days of my youth when I had no notes to pay for myself or friends. In my early days the peace and quiet of my old home was disturbed by the roar of cannon and the rattle of musketry, our northern friends were constantly endeavoring to intrest themselves upon us, but there was a pile of "Picalenine" lying around in old Virginia waiting until they came along to greet them with a cannon song; with powder dry and hope before us we often awoke to the cannons' chorus. But to the point in question; the line had been closely drawn and our people were cut off from the world beyond, hence "nick-nacks" were things of the past. Ah! well, do I remember a trip made to town by my dear mother. Many were the bundles and odd were their shapes when I stood by and saw them one by one lifted from the old family "carryall" and bright beamed the face of her, who has long since gone hence, when she informed me that "Krislkingle" would be with us in the morning. Childhae, the excitement of the occasion dispelled all sleep from my eyes, how I tossed through that long and weary night of December 24, 1865. Finally day dawned and out of bed I jumped, I did not take the time to dress, what was the use tiny little slip was sufficienth, I ran into the room wherein my parents were quietly sleeping and low, what a sight confronted me! My sock was filled with all the good things that could be obtained at that time, but above all the beautiful things my eyes ever beheld I espied in the shape of a pair of boots with red tops. Just think of red tops; in the centre of which was a golden star, I waited not for socks, but glided into those lovely boots, and I am sure Napoleon, in his palmiest days, did not hold a candle to me. When we awake from the dream of our childhood and launch our craft upon the ocean of life and become bread winners, true happiness vanishes as does the dew before a morning sun. Things become real and then a clash until the curtain drops and we disappear from the scene of action and become lost, save to the memory of those who appreciated us during life. I know not how long I may be called upon to combat with the affairs of this life. God has been merciful, my people generous and kind. I have seen both sides of the picture and with all there will never come a time so long as my frail mind revolves upon its lubricated axle, that the bright and happy day of that memorable Christmas of 1865 will not remain the brightest and happiest of all. When you were a child were you ever reminded of the slow pace seemingly made by father time? A broad-street mule car was then an "Alix." Such now is not the case. The years seem to roll around with lightening-like rapidity. You give your obligation for ninety days and it becomes due in thirty. Against your will and accord you are struggling in the current of progress and are not allowed rest of mind and body. Hence you stand upon the threshold of eternity with your sweet recollections of the past, butter-fly like flittering before you. And now upon the usual festivities of this occasion let us arsist in making happy the dear little children, and as there is no sunshine in your homes without them, do as I have done, borrow from one "orphan asylum" and regale them with a pair of red top boots (minus the star). Let the good wife be the star by which their future lives may be shaped and guided. "Let fate do its worst. There are seasons of joy. Bright dreams of the past, that it cannot destroy."

"ESSEX."

In the last of the forties, being then long-breathed as any hound of "black St. Hubert's breed," I ran four country miles and back again to get my Christmas suit of Sunday clothes. Next morning, in pants that felt so smooth to the palm of my hand, and a comely jacket, I went home with a schoolmate loved as Damon loved Pythias.

Oh, the pretty girls that adorned the morning and gave light and every joy to the quick-footed evening hours in that bright day when Plancus was consul and the nightingale sang as he never will again! That was a Christmas to be remembered, though another half-century roll by. One of those girls—her voice was a lute, her eye bright "with purest ray serene;" the light of heaven is shining on her golden hair now as my fancy saw it then. Well—she afterwards wrote me that I was too late.

Moral: Who fears his fate deserves to be "too late"; and outside of home the place to spend an old-time Christmas was on the lower rivers, where old Virginia was born, among the girls, the love of whom ennobled us, whose presence prompted us to "high thoughts and courtesy and all that makes a man;" and yet they were not very much lovelier than some of the charming children and modest maidens I see around me now.

MR. S. S. P. PATTESON.

The question suggests pleasant fancies, for who cannot recall, with the most exquisite delight, the long time gone, when

"The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there?"

Durable as are the impressions of infancy, few of us can single out our happiest Christmas. I am not one of the few. The charming recollections are all confused. None of us can forget

"—the fragrant old faith when we watched the cold gray
Reluctantly line the dim border of day,
When we braved the bare floor with our little bare feet—
No shrine to a pilgrim was ever so sweet."

The pop-crackers, mistletoe and the anticipation surrounded the occasions with a pleasure genuine and unmixed with any doubt, which the period of childhood can give better than any other.

POLK MILLER.

My happiest Christmas? Well, it was in the good old ante-bellum days, when every white boy and nigger on the plantation had pop-crackers and popped them from daybreak on the morning of the 25th to midnight on the 31st of December, when we would all go down to the cow-pen ("cup'n" in those days), to see the cows down on their knees at prayer. The old negroes told us that the cows welcomed the new year in with prayer, and while I believed it, and often went to visit the sight, I must confess that I never saw it. The coming of negroes who were hired out by the year, as tanners, blacksmiths, carpenters and shoemakers, and whom we never saw at any other time, was a great pleasure to me and to them, and as they never failed to bring me "sump'n good," and made a "heap o' fuss" over me, it made me happy. Then, too, it was a time when I could enjoy the companionship of those whom I preferred. The white boy was good enough to play with at school, but he was inclined to have his way, and if I opposed any proposition made by him to play a certain game he or I one would have to give in or fight it out. But the negro boys looked up to me, and whatever was my will was theirs, and they obeyed me in all things and followed wherever I led. I loved the negro boys and they loved me, and the fun, the pleasure and the happiness that I have had with them will never be understood and appreciated, except by the men who, like myself, lived and moved and had their being at the time when the people of the South, both white and black, were contented and happy, and when "to please ole Marster and ole Mistis" was the negro's highest ambition. But

"No mo' will I hunt for de 'possum an' de coon,
Or set about dat sweet ole cabin doh.
For de cruel war has ruined my happy Southern home,
An' I never 'specks to see de like no mo'."

MR. GEORGE T. TIBBITTS.

As the train rolled on the passenger grew more anxious each moment to reach his destination. It had been several months since he had visited the cherished spot, and many Christmas tides had passed without his favorite seat at the table being taken.

The parents, ever anxious to have the children within the circle, especially on this joyous December day, were not expecting the prodigal home. As the passenger left the train a few familiar faces stood about and greeted him, but time could not be wasted along the way, for only within a few blocks was the happy home for which he was bound. In the twilight the visiter stepped upon the porch, and after ringing the bell was bidden to enter, standing as a stranger before her who is ever dearest to man's heart—Mother. Yes, it was a surprise. She recognized his voice, as he said:

"I have come this Christmas Eve to spend that happy day with you and father." The tears on her cheeks were not of sorrow, but of joy. The stocking was filled that night by old Santa Claus, as in the times long past.

The fourth seat at the table, which was expected to be vacant and the plate unused, was filled by one who did full justice to the excellent repast, and never did he enjoy a visit, meal or day more than that Christmas of 1891.

MR. FRANK J. CRAIGIE, JR.

As well as I remember, my happiest Christmas was that of 1886, in the city of Rochester, N. Y. My father gave me a pair of skates, nickel-plated and the envy of the neighborhood. My delight knew no bounds, so, with skates hanging on a strap over my shoulder, I started in search of a companion. I found him and enticed the poor unfortunate to come out on the river and try my "skating sail" scheme, just perfected. We put it together. It was a simple thing—two bamboo sticks crossed like an X, with a piece of unbleached cotton six feet long and a yard wide, stretched across it. Bill asked no impertinent questions about it, but as we neared the river he began to grow very pale. Before we came back he was still more so, except where a few large purple knobs stood out on his careworn face; he called them bruises, I think.

We returned late in the day, with our skating sail rolled up in a wad in my pocket. The sticks were broken when my skates struck the hidden log in the ice and I went a few rods through the cold, dismal atmosphere.

So was spent the happiest Christmas of my life, and even now I think of that day with unalloyed pleasure. Such a Christmas usually lasts for a week or more, according to the number and location of the bruises.

MR. ARTHUR P. CLARKE.

My Christmas days have usually been spent in a very uneventful fashion, and I shall have to go back to childhood's happy hours to pick out one of especial note for its enjoyment.

When I was a youngster there were snows that were snows, when we boys would make slides down Broad street Hill from Twenty-third street to Seventeenth or Eighteenth. On this particular occasion I had been sliding Christmas Eve on a home-made sleigh of only moderate speed, but Christmas morning brought me a brand-new coaster, with bright red rockers, a green seat and gilded letters. It filled me with joy. I polished the rockers with a brickbat and a piece of lard and went to that hillside with all the pride of a monarch. It proved the fastest of all the small sleds on the track, and hundreds of times did I, with a companion, shoot down that big hill and walk up. I kept at it all day, kicked out a new paid of heels and went home cold and hungry, supremely contented with my day's achievement.

Amongst the sleighs used in those days was one worthy of note. It was a big double-decker, carrying ten or twelve big boys or men, and named "Stonewall." The speed of that sleigh was terrific as she shot past old Bellvue Hospital or Trinity church. She was usually manned by Andrew Duesberry, Jim Gibbons, John Greaner, Raleigh Ferguson and others, and great times, frequently until late at night, were enjoyed on that great coasting ground. Its utility for that purpose is now greatly impaired by the electric car line crossing it at Twenty-first street.

MR. OTIS H. RUSSELL.

Your inquiry, "Which was the happiest Christmas I ever spent?" reminds me how uniform these annual festive occasions have been to me. They have all been happy, and I usually think the last Christmas spent the happiest of them all. Those spent in boyhood were full of fun and frolic, but those since manhood so brimful of happiness and contentment that I cannot single one out as the happiest, among so many.

MR. JOHN B. CULPEPER.

I suppose in reality the happiest Christmas a man spends during his lifetime is when he is a boy and wakes up in the morning and looks at his stocking loaded down with good things, and afterwards goes out in the street to fire off his crackers and have a good time generally. I can remember some very happy occasions of this kind during my childhood. The one Christmas which stands out most vividly in my memory is that on which I and a boy named Jimmie started out to have a glorious time, and after burning up the usual amount of fireworks and eating about a quarter of a peck of candy, nuts, raisins, etc., wound up by placing some powder in the stove in my father's store, during his absence for a short while, just to see how it would work. It worked all right. I don't know what Jimmie's mother did to him, but I know what I got. My memory is quite clear on that point. But we didn't mind it, as we had our fun.

On looking over my diary, which I have kept since 1851, I find that all my Christmasses have been spent quietly at home, and about the happiest passed in late years was in 1891, when my wife was living.

I wish The Times and its representatives a merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New-Year.

REV. DR. W. W. LANDRUM.

One of my happiest Christmas-Days was spent in the Virginia penitentiary—not as a prisoner, however. At the request of some of the noblest women in this community I accompanied them to the women's ward, and spoke to the female prisoners. After the address each one of these unhappy sisters received a Christmas present of candy, fruit and a tract, as a soul blessing, lying at the bottom of the little sack of good things. It has always seemed to me that He who came to "set at liberty them that are bound" will be highly pleased to see His disciples on missions of love and mercy to the prisoners on the anniversary of His birth.

My boyhood was passed in Savannah, Ga., where my companions and myself had many a merry and jolly Christmas. The crowning Christmas adventure in those days was the challenge to go swimming in the canal, as a test of courage and test of self-mastery, and the challenge was sometimes accepted by a dozen or more simpletons.

Your readers will appreciate this letter possibly. The "secular head" of my family, a native of King William county, received it at the date mentioned.

Santa Claus' House, Dec. 25, 1894.

My dear Lottie: How glad I would be if I had nice presents for the children this year, as I usually have. I send you all I have to spare this year. Can't you wait just one year longer, until Mr. Jeff. Davis and Uncle Bob Lee have taught Mr. Abe Lincoln to behave himself, and let me get toys for the children? When that good time comes, Lottie, I will send you nice toys and dolls and pretty things that you will have to get mama and grandma and Aunt Charlotte to give you all the chests and boxes and drawers and trunks to put them in. Until then you must be a good child and wait.

Your best friend,
SANTA CLAUS.

MR. MARION L. DAWSON.

My Christmas holidays have heretofore been so uneventful that I would have to make a draft on my imagination so large that it would not be honored if I hope to make an account of any of them sufficiently interesting to deserve space in your paper: I will say, however, that I reached this terrestrial sphere on Christmas Eve twenty-eight years ago, and have no doubt that any one of the two or three that immediately followed was the happiest that I have spent, though my memory is not sufficiently clear touching the events that then transpired to say just how the time was passed.

MR. EVAN P. CHESTERMAN.

Which was my happiest Christmas? did you ask? Ah, hard indeed is it for me to delve into the past and resurrect the memories of twenty-four odgestous of delightful rumination, and consequent indigestion. And yet, recalling all those days, made sacred by the fond recollection of my appetite, methinks I see one looming up with a distinctness that brings it right before my face. I had not arrived at the age of discretion then—in fact, I have not yet reached that period—for I was a small boy, with a large head and destructive proclivities. When the babewakers of our vicinage aroused me from my anxious dreams that Christmas morn, I found, on inspecting the mantel, that Santa Claus had benignly placed in my history a nice little hammer, a plaster of Paris cat, and other perishable toys of a perishable nature. At this juncture history attempted to repeat itself. No sooner did I get my hands upon the hammer than all my puerile essedness began to assert itself, and like G. Washington with the hatchet, I felt an irresistible desire to play thunder with something. In a few minutes nothing but the debris of the plaster of Paris cat remained to tell the story of its pristine feline existence, and following that the work of demolition went on. My father, finding that the melody of his snore was made discordant by other sounds, arose in wrath and also in his negligee costume to seek the whys and wherefores of the disturbance. Finding me amid the devastation, he quickly divined the cause of the noise and forgetting that he was a member of Dr. Hoge's church, he lost his temper. He seized my little hammer, and uniting with me, he wreaked vengeance on all my toys. By the time we got through our heartside presented a scene of carnage. All that remained of my toys were the wire entrails of the cat, the squeaking apparatus of my merino sheep and the whiskers of my devil in the bandbox. I held a post-mortem examination over the sawdust which had lined the abdominal recesses of my doll-baby, and then, realizing my sin, I went—yes, wailed and gnashed my teeth, and refused to be comforted. But to-day, looking back through golden vistas quivering with jelly and frosted with the icings of fruit-cake, I recall that hammer with ecstatic bliss.

DR. HUNTER MCGUIRE.

The happiest Christmas I ever spent was the Christmas of 1866. I was married just the week before.

MR. THOMAS POTTS.

It would be a hard question to answer—Which was the happiest Christmas? My whole life has been one of happiness, and if my life decided upon a correct answer I could not give it, as I have had nothing but happy Christmasses. Now, if you will permit me, I will tell you of one spent in London that was full of interest, but not by far the happiest, for I was alone in London, and that is not a pleasant feeling at that season of the year.

The midnight hour came, with the sound of the sweet-toned bells from the tower of old Saint Martin's-in-the-Field, telling to busy, bustling, rustling London that Christmas had come again, full of the sweet story of a Savior born for the redemption of mankind. I worshipped that Christmas-Day in Westminster Abbey, surrounded by a happy Christian congregation, and was transported from earth to the heaven land by the sweet music of that most perfect choir of men and boys. As the music rolled through that historic building, I could in fancy hear the song of the blessed one who had passed over to enjoy the home of the saints. That service in the Abbey and that Christmas in London will live with me while memory lasts.

DR. JUD. B. WOOD.

My happiest Christmas was when a boy I always had a good time. The snow came oftener then on Christmas Eve than now, when with red-top boots, astride of sleds, we Richmond boys would coast the Broad-street hill. Firecrackers no larger than a cigarette (Ginter's) made us happy. We did not know the horrid joy of babywakers and raneid peacock screeching horns. One Christmas that comes to mind just now was when to my brothers three and me was given a big Newfoundland dog. We divided up the ownership, and the tail fell to me. Hitched to a velocipede, everything else was thrown aside for him, and since that time I have always loved the friendly wave of a dog's flag.

MR. JOHN D. POTTS.

On January 16, 1865, I was married, and therefore you can record Christmas, 1894, as being an exceedingly happy one to me. No happier, however, than each succeeding Christmas has been. I can only recall the great feast as being without particular interest and pleasure to me in years previous to my becoming a Benedict. I wish I possessed the ways and means to make every one as happy as I expect to be with my little family this Christmas.

MAYOR RICHARD M. TAYLOR.

The happiest Christmas I ever spent was around Mr. Benny Catogni's, at Eighteenth and Main streets, before the war, shooting pop-crackers and blowing tin horns with the boys.

REV. DR. A. E. DICKINSON.

The happiest Christmas I ever enjoyed came to me when I was a boy of from seven to ten years. For months previous to Christmas the one all-absorbing theme with the thirteen children—the younger ones at least—with whom my parents were blessed, was Christmas—what we would do and what we would get. I remember how we would lie awake through nights almost, and talk about the coming Christmas, weeks before it came. The bright and blessed anticipation grew brighter day by day until Christmas-Eve came, and then the joy was perfect and unalloyed. All night long I have laid awake watching for the dawn of Christmas-Day, and quivering with wild delight. We had no pop-crackers, but we managed to make things lively. My mother prepared for us a better breakfast than usual. We had biscuits, and possibly an apple or two that had been saved up to brighten the occasion, and a few sticks of candy, etc., fell to our happy lot. Generally we, white and black boys, went hunting and ran hares all day, and came home broken down and ready, from mere exhaustion, to make up for the sleep lost on the previous night. I can say truly that they were the happiest days that have come to me during a long and busy life.

DR. W. W. PARKER.

For forty-six years I have had no Christmas. I have worked as hard that day as any other. The happiest of my boyhood Christmas days was mostly due to the good things of the table that from the 25th of December until the 1st of January greatly engaged my thoughts. When I was a boy in a country village twenty-five cents was regarded by a father as enough money for a boy of twelve to spend. It only bought a half-pound of candy, or one package of pop-crackers, but it got a good deal of whisky, and I am sorry to say that some of the quarter was expended in that most unprofitable article. A most remarkable change I find has taken place in the last fifty years in the amount of money expended on children at Christmas time. Indeed the attention and time expended on children is one of the best signs of the times. It is the result of Christ's teachings beyond all question. Where one dollar was spent fifty years ago fifty are now expended. The toy industry has become a big thing. I fear the love of children for their parents has not increased in anything like the same proportion.

MR. MAURICE W. THOMAS.

The happiest Christmas I ever spent? Well, let me see. I have spent a good many happy ones, but probably the happiest one I ever spent was in my sixth year—right here in Richmond.

My mother brought me up from Brunswick county (where I was born) to spend the holidays at my "Aunt Lucy's." I can distinctly recall the night before Christmas.

I had reached that point in my life where I began to doubt all this stuff about Santa Claus. I began to suspect he was a humbug. With my mind upset with conflicting emotions, I went to bed that night, wondering how things were going to "pan out" in the morning. Long before any of the household were stirring, I was up on a tour of investigation.

And what an array was there of such things as will gladden the heart of any boy of that age. There was a pair of red-top boots, with brass tips, a "Jim Dandy" hobby-horse, a school bag, a pair of reins, a writing desk, a beautiful gilt cup, marked on the face of it: "For a good boy," candies, nuts, pop-crackers, and raisins, till you couldn't rest.

And a horn with a blast on it that would have put Balaam's ass to blushes. I forthwith proceeded to test its powers. "Great Caesar's ghost," what a racket I did raise. It only took me a short while to arouse the whole household.

I was supremely happy. But as the morning began to wane, and the joy of receiving so many gifts began to wear off, there dawned upon my mind that the dearest wish of my heart was missing. I wanted a wagon. At once I commenced to cry: "Oh, I want a waggin; I want a waggin." My relatives crowded around me and tried to pacify me, but I refused to be comforted. At last my kind, indulgent mother, in order to make life endurable in the house, took me with her up on Broad street, and bought the nicest wagon that could be purchased. From then on the day was one of unalloyed bliss. I had everything my heart could desire, but the wagon proved my undoing. Like the woman in the Scarlet Letter, I go about with the tale of the wagon tacked to me.

Whenever any one mentions some of my good traits of character, readers interrupt them with: "No, sarely you have not heard about Maurice and the wagon." And so, from generation unto generation, this wagon tale is being handed down, and long after I have "turned up" my toes to the daisies it will be remembered against me. "The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred in their bones."

Much Run Down

Was my condition, says Mr. Wm. Weatherford, tax collector at Key West, Florida. My appetite was poor and I was quite miserable. Friends advised me to take Hood's Sarsaparilla. I have taken 5 bottles, and am much better, have gained in weight, and enjoy a good appetite.

Mr. Wm. Weatherford

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We won't carry over a single toy. We replenish our Toy stock fresh every year, and we make this no exception. So we have cut the price on every toy.

A Few Specials.

Handkerchief Sale To-morrow.

Mink Boas, $2 quality, to-morrow $1.

Pocket-Books.

50c. quality, to-morrow 25c.
$1.00 quality, to-morrow, 50c.
$1.50 quality to-morrow in Card-Case and Pocket-Book, 75c.
$1 Card-Case and Pocket-Book, 50c.
We print your name in gold for 15c.

Novelties in Jewelry.

Gold Rings, warranted for six years, 19c.
Gentlemen's Nickel Watches for $1.50.
Envelope Cutters in sterling, 75c.
Umbrella Clasps, 20c.
Stick Pins, 15, 25, and 50c.

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Genuine Nullifier Slipper, in Russian Calf, $1.50; regular price $2.

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